

FREE ISSUE

PREVIEW GRAN TURISMO 7

PREVIEW TINY TINA'S WONDERLANDS



ISSUE 82 FEB/MAR 2022



Gamecenter

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UNTITLED THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD SEQUEL

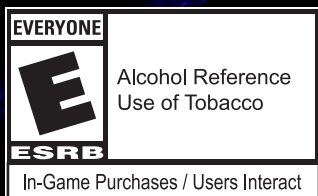
GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK

STARFIELD



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2022
PREVIEW



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AVAILABLE 03.04.22

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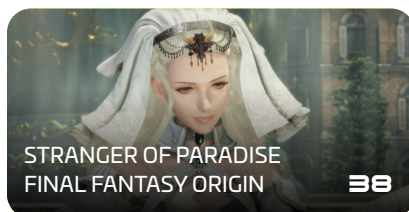
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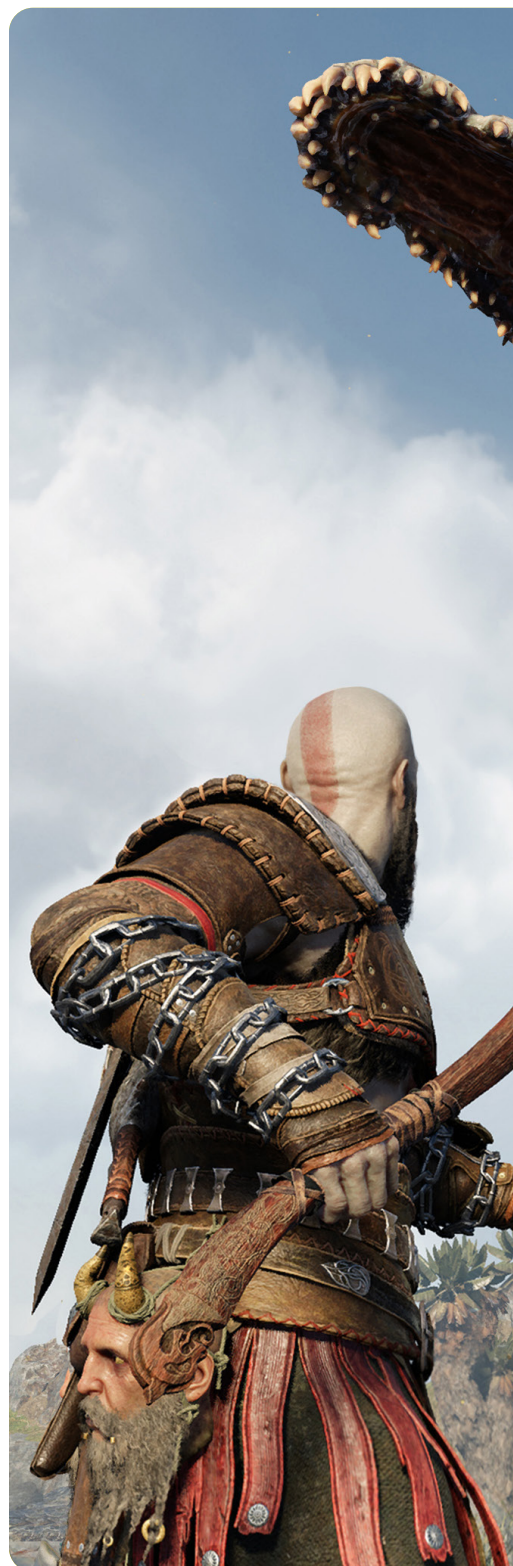
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FROM THE EDITORS



META NARRATIVE

As we're finishing this issue of *Walmart Gamecenter*, the Consumer Electronics Show is wrapping up in Las Vegas. While CES is usually known for its hardware announcements, one of the biggest buzzwords at this year's show isn't in the realm of TVs or smart devices or graphics cards. No, this year, everyone is talking about the metaverse.

If you're unfamiliar with the concept, the metaverse is an immersive online virtual world in which people can interact in many of the same ways we do in real life. In the metaverse, you might work from home not by sending emails and attending Zoom meetings, but by strapping on a headset that lets you walk around a virtual office and see your coworkers' avatars. Instead of going out to a concert with your friends, you might all attend the show remotely, getting a virtual front-row seat to a live performance.

The idea that we might soon enter the metaverse has been growing in popularity over the last few years, and now it looks like investors are betting big that someone will make the idea work. Facebook even changed its company name to Meta to reflect its increased focus on the concept.

So why are we mentioning this in *Walmart Gamecenter*? Because one underappreciated fact is that any future metaverse, should it come to pass, will owe a massive debt to video games.

Yes, the concept of a metaverse didn't originate in gaming. (The term actually dates back to a 1992 sci-fi novel, *Snow Crash*.) And not all of the technologies that will underpin any future metaverse—like real-time 3D graphics and virtual reality headsets—originated with gaming in mind. But there's no question these technologies owe their current sophistication to games. If developers hadn't been able to make money off them by making games, they never would've advanced enough to allow for the truly immersive worlds a metaverse requires.

Heck, given the baby steps *Fortnite* has taken in that direction already, maybe it'll be an actual game that becomes the foundation for the metaverse. Maybe we'll all end up hosting business meetings and family holidays in some future incarnation of *GTA Online*. Just don't accidentally blow up grandma.

If thinking about a metaversal future is sending your brain into too much of a tizzy, don't worry. While we're still looking ahead in this issue of the magazine, our focus is a lot more manageable: 2022. For our cover story, we're running down more than two dozen of the most anticipated titles out this year, including *Starfield*, *God of War Ragnarök*, and the next *Zelda*. We've also got longer previews of *Tiny Tina's Wonderlands*, *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin*, and *Gran Turismo Sport*.

The future—metaversal or otherwise—will be here before you know it, so keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson
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heightened range of sensations unlike any other—thanks to the creativity of the game worlds being built by our world-class developers, and the latest technology incorporated into the hardware.”

Along with the hardware announcement, Sony also revealed the first of those game worlds made specifically for PlayStation VR2.

SONY REVEALS THE FUTURE OF PLAYSTATION VR

We’ve known for a while now that a new generation of Sony’s PlayStation VR technology would be coming for the PlayStation 5, but now, the company has offered up far more details on what that future holds.

While its name might not offer much new, the hardware behind PlayStation VR2 certainly will. The new headset will feature 4K HDR OLED displays for each eye that offer 110-degree fields of view and smoother frame rates of 90/120Hz. The headset itself will now track you and your controller through embedded cameras, rather than the external camera used for the original PS VR hardware. The PlayStation VR2 headset will also be able to track eye movement for heightened input and camera controls,

as well as include special haptic feedback technology to provide immersive vibrations much like the PlayStation 5’s DualSense controller.

Speaking of controllers, those new PlayStation VR2 features will work in tandem with Sony’s previously revealed PS VR2 Sense controllers to provide a far more lifelike and interactive virtual reality experience.

“PlayStation VR2 takes VR gaming to a whole new level, enabling a greater sense of presence and allowing players to escape into game worlds like never before,” said Hideaki Nishino, senior vice president of platform experience at Sony, as part of the announcement. “With the headset on and controllers in hand, players will feel a

“With the headset on and controllers in hand, players will feel a heightened range of sensations unlike any other...”

HIDEAKI NISHINO, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF PLATFORM EXPERIENCE AT SONY



of an entirely new character” according to Guerrilla studio director and studio art/animation director Jan-Bart van Beek, and is being designed “to push hardware technology, innovation, and gameplay.”

While Sony has yet to give an official release date for PlayStation VR2, you can keep up on its upcoming launch—or check out the current generation of PlayStation VR hardware and games—on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

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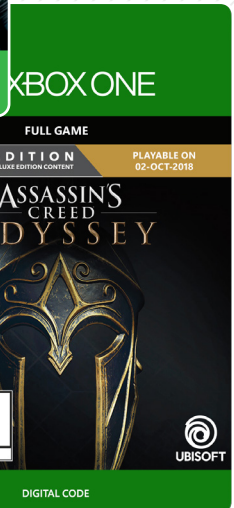
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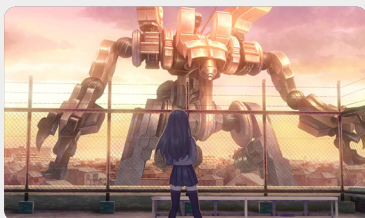
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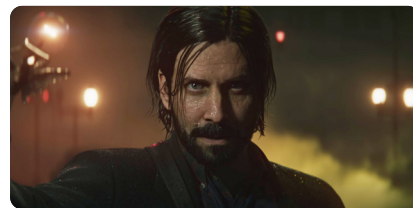
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ALAN WAKE II WILL BE MORE 'SURVIVAL HORROR' THAN ITS PREDECESSOR

One of the biggest new game announcements at the tail end of 2021 was the long-awaited sequel to *Control* and *Max Payne* developer Remedy Entertainment's cult classic, *Alan Wake*.

Coming off the recent launch of *Alan Wake Remastered*, and a decade after the original game's release, Remedy finally announced a full-on sequel. But don't expect the game to be as action-oriented as its predecessor or its semi-sequel, *Alan Wake's American Nightmare*. Surprisingly, creative director Sam Lake said during a 2021 Game Awards interview that *Alan Wake II* will be "Remedy's first-ever survival-horror game."

Why now? Lake stated that Remedy has been "iterating on the concept" for



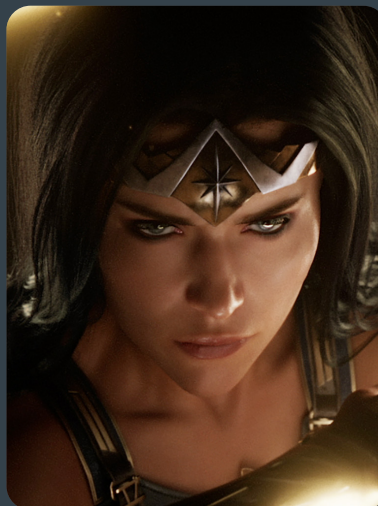
Alan Wake II for a while, and this was just the right time to finally release it. Our best guess is that the story will revolve around Mr. Scratch, Alan Wake's evil doppelganger that appeared in *American Nightmare*. Indeed, the *Control* expansion "AWE" hinted that Mr. Scratch was still on the loose.

Alan Wake II is launching in 2023. Check out Remedy's other games on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

WARNER BROS. GAMES
WELCOMES WONDER WOMAN

After the runaway success of the *Batman Arkham* games, fans have wondered who might be the next DC superhero to get their own equally epic adventure from Warner Bros. Games.

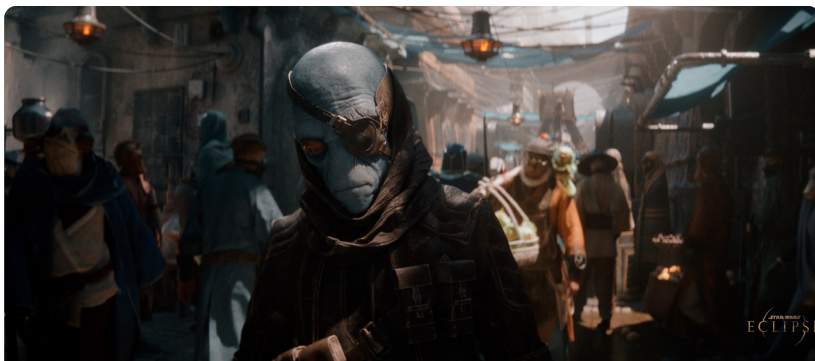
Well, it turns out that "wonder" certainly is the proper word to use there, because it'll be none other than Princess Diana of Themyscira herself, Wonder Woman. According to Warner Bros. Games, a new original story set within the DC Universe will see players guide Diana through a "single-player open-world action game" in a "fight to unite her Amazon family and the humans from the modern world."



By far one of the most interesting elements of the yet-to-be-titled project is that developer Monolith Productions is bringing over the Nemesis system from *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* and its sequel. We've got to say, a core gameplay system built around forging alliances with friends and fueling rivalries

with foes seems like a perfect fit for superheroes. So, we can't wait to see how the idea turns out.

To keep up with Wonder Woman, or to check out the variety of other games based around superheroes that are already out there, check out your local Walmart store or Walmart.co



DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN DEVELOPER MAKING A STAR WARS GAME

As revealed at the 2021 Game Awards, *Detroit: Become Human* and *Heavy Rain* developer Quantic Dream is working on a new *Star Wars* game, and we already know a surprising amount of details about it.

Star Wars Eclipse is a “new action adventure, multiple-character branching narrative game set in the High Republic era,” according to the game’s official website. For those who are not as fluent in the *Star Wars* universe, the High Republic era basically spans the 250 years leading up to *The Phantom Menace*. It encompasses a time of peace and prosperity, the golden age of the Jedi, and a period of expansion into the uncharted territory of the Outer Rim. (Of course, we all know how *that* ends up, thanks to the prequel movies, but we don’t have to worry about that right now.)

While we don’t know *who* we’ll be playing as, we do know that, like *Detroit: Become Human*, we’ll be playing as multiple characters. Each character has “their own morality, personality, motivations, and impact upon each other and the story at large.” As we’ve come to expect from a Quantic Dream game, the choices that you

make can change the outcome of each narrative branch, though we expect that, since it’s a *Star Wars* game, there will probably be one ending that is canon.

Quantic Dream has confirmed that much of the game will take place in the Outer Rim, and players will encounter species never before seen in the *Star Wars* universe. We’ve seen at least one familiar face in the form of Jedi master Yoda. Still, the dude did live to the ripe old age of 800, so that doesn’t tell us much about when precisely the game is set.

As far as the plot is concerned, we do get a few hints in the trailer that accompanied *Eclipse*’s announcement. We see a couple of Jedi squaring off on a bridge, more Jedi facing down charging enemies, and a large army marching to... somewhere. What’s likely is that *Eclipse* will be part of the second phase of Lucasfilm’s *Star Wars: The High Republic*, an ongoing multimedia project that covers the period prior to the films taking place.

There’s no release date for *Star Wars Eclipse* quite yet, but keep an eye on [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) for any future announcements.

HALO TV SERIES TAKES PLACE IN A DIFFERENT TIMELINE FROM THE GAMES

As we were reminded with the launch of *Halo Infinite*, *Halo* lore is deep, and fans are serious about it. But if you were worried about the upcoming TV series messing with your beloved canon, then you can rest easy knowing that it exists on a different timeline from the games, comics, and novels.

That’s according to 343 Industries studio head Kiki Wolfkill, who called



the timeline that the TV series exists in the “silver timeline.” Not only was this decision made to protect “the core canon” of the games and novels, but it also gives the TV series room to follow its own story.

A recent trailer for the show gave us our first look at Pablo Schrieber in Master Chief’s Mjolnir armor, as well as several other characters who should be familiar to *Halo* fans, including Natascha McElhone as Dr. Halsey.

Meanwhile, if you’re jonesing for your *Halo* fix, you can check out *Halo Infinite*, which just launched for Xbox Series X/S and Xbox One late last year. Find it on [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) or at your local Walmart store.



5 to play



ELDEN RING

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC. / DEVELOPER FROMSOFTWARE / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 02.25.2022

"*Elden Ring* is an action adventure role-playing game that features a vast world with danger lurking around every corner. You play as a Tarnished, who has crossed the Sea of Fog into The Lands Between seeking the power of the Elden Ring to become the Elden Lord. As with other games from FromSoftware, players explore the world, talk to characters, and discover secrets to uncover the more intricate details of the story. But for this game, [*Game of Thrones* author] George R.R. Martin created the backstories to many characters and the history of the world. As for the combat, while *Elden Ring* is similar to *Dark Souls* in that players arm themselves with a variety of melee weapons and magic spells, it expands upon [that series] by introducing mounted combat on horseback, allowing for more maneuverability and range, jumping attacks, and a Guard Counter move that lets players quickly hit enemies after successfully blocking an attack."

"For this game, [*Game of Thrones* author] George R.R. Martin created the backstories to many characters and the history of the world."

NICK O'LEARY, SENIOR PR MANAGER, BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.

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PREORDER

HORIZON FORBIDDEN WEST

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER GUERRILLA GAMES / PLATFORMS PS5, PS4 / RELEASE DATE 02.18.2022

In 2017's *Horizon Zero Dawn*, a young warrior named Aloy came into her own and saved the post-apocalyptic wasteland she called home by defeating a rogue A.I. that had infected the world's robotic animals. Not surprisingly, this sequel also has Aloy trying to stop a plague—except this time it requires her to travel to, and explore, a land called The Forbidden West. As you'd expect, this has her taking on more robots, including some that are bigger and more dangerous than in the previous game, as well as people who live in the West and hate interlopers. But she also has to do more swimming this time around, including into some submerged ruins. Bigger and more dangerous robots roam the game's more expansive world, which reimagines such recognizable places as San Francisco and Yosemite Valley. Exploring the Forbidden West may just reveal more about how our world turned into hers.

Bigger and more dangerous robots roam the game's more expansive world, which reimagines such recognizable places as San Francisco and Yosemite Valley.





BUY NOW

DYING LIGHT 2 STAY HUMAN

PUBLISHER TECHLAND, SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER TECHLAND / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 02.04.2022

"*Dying Light 2* is a post-apocalyptic, open-world, first-person action game with role-playing elements in which parkour is used to survive an infected world. It's set roughly 20 years after the first game, in a world where the infected have won, causing the fall of modern civilization and the rise of a new Dark Age. When working on this sequel, we spent a lot of time rebuilding and improving the first game's key mechanics. We added new enemies and new ways to tactically approach each fight, and worked on making the parkour aspects more believable. We also refined movement itself, and added a huge number of new moves and useful tools for the player, such as the paraglider. But my favorite thing is the many, many choices that await players, both in the narrative and gameplay. These choices change the appearance of the world, and the fate of our characters."

DAWID LUBRYKA, ANIMATION DIRECTOR, TECHLAND

"We added new enemies and new ways to tactically approach each fight, and worked on making the parkour aspects more believable."







 **PREORDER**

ELEX II

PUBLISHER THQ NORDIC / DEVELOPER PIRANHA BYTES / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 03.01.2022

After the original became something of an instant cult classic, developer Piranha Bytes is back with *Elex II*, the much-expanded next chapter in its open-world role-playing saga. We catch up with main character Jax several years after his defeat of the Hybrid, as the planet Magalan now faces an all-new threat and Jax's son Dex has gone missing. In *Elex II*, players will be able to travel to farther corners of Magalan, where they'll meet NPCs who will play a much bigger part of the story. Now, those characters will not only remember what Jax has done in the past, but also join or leave Jax's group depending on his behavior. And, depending on your actions, they can even be killed, further altering the narrative. How you (and Jax) approach the planet's five major factions will be incredibly important, as only by bringing them all together can Magalan be saved from the power of the dark Elex.

Developer Piranha Bytes is back with *Elex II*, the much-expanded next chapter in its open-world role-playing saga.



5

* PREORDER

THE KING OF FIGHTERS XV

PUBLISHER KOCH MEDIA / DEVELOPER SNK CORPORATION / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 02.17.2022

“The biggest difference between *The King of Fighters* and other fighting games is that it’s a 3-on-3 fighting game, with all three [team members] sharing the same power gauge. If one character goes down in a round, the next in line inherits the rest of the power gauge, and this allows for some crazy shenanigans later on in the match, including flipping it in your favor. As for *KoF XV*, we’ve implemented a new system called ‘Shatter Strike’ that can be used for both defense and attack to continue an attack combo on an opponent. We also upgraded all of the systems carried over from *KoF XIV*, but made them a touch simpler while keeping the core gameplay rich and deep. We’ve even brought back some popular characters without making them feel out of place, including ones from *Fatal Fury*, *Art of Fighting*, *Ikari Warriors*, and *Psycho Soldiers*.”

YASUYUKI ODA, GENERAL MANAGER OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION 1, SNK CORPORATION

“If one character goes down in a round, the next in line inherits the rest of the power gauge, and this allows for some crazy shenanigans later on in the match.”



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2022

This year's biggest games will take us to the stars, fantastical worlds, and forgotten lands. They'll open windows to the past, present, and future. They'll cast us as heroes, villains, and something in between. Here are 26 of the games we're most looking forward to in 2022.

PREVIEW

BY WALMART GAMECENTER STAFF



HIGHLY ANTICIPATED!

STARFIELD

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / DEVELOPER BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS /
PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PC / RELEASE DATE 11.11.22

Over the last couple of decades, Bethesda has mastered the art of developing compelling, narrative-driven action RPGs in high-fantasy and post-apocalyptic settings. Now the legendary studio has set its sights on the stars, tackling space-faring, planet-hopping sci-fi for the first time in *Starfield*.

Bethesda is the master of world-building (or galaxy-building, in this instance), and *Starfield* is no exception. By the year 2330, humanity has colonized part of the Milky Way in what are known as the "Settled Systems." 20 years earlier, humanity's two major factions—the United Colonies and the Freestar Collective—duked it out in the Colony War, but they have now reached an "uneasy peace," according to Bethesda.

That's where you begin your journey in *Starfield*. You'll play as one of the newest members of Constellation, an organization that's dedicated to exploring further out into space. Navigating the treacherous outer reaches of the galaxy will surely provide a deeply entertaining journey.



HIGHLY ANTICIPATED!

UNTITLED THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD SEQUEL

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER NINTENDO / PLATFORMS SWITCH /
RELEASE DATE 2022

Five years have passed since *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* graced our Switches, and we still don't even know the name of the sequel. But a game as highly anticipated as this one needs an appropriate amount of time in the oven.

What we have seen so far, however, is pretty darn exciting, and looks set to once again flip the script on the traditional *Zelda* formula. From what we can tell, a new Calamitous threat has shattered the world of Hyrule, sending pieces of it into the sky, forcing Link and Zelda to once again figure out how to put the world back together. Link has some new tricks up his sleeve that seem to be variations on abilities gained in *Breath of the Wild*. Instead of freezing an object in time, Stasis seems to reverse time, and a variation on Revali's Gale seems to let Link shoot straight up through surfaces.

That the game is near the top of our list for 2022 when so much remains a mystery speaks to just how much goodwill Nintendo earned with *Breath of the Wild*. Turns out making one of the best games of all time buys you a lot of patience.

GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER SONY SANTA MONICA
STUDIO / PLATFORMS PS5, PS4 / RELEASE DATE 2022

Call it a sequel, a soft reboot, whatever you want. 2018's *God of War* refreshed a stale series with more confidence and sophistication than anyone expected. In transporting Kratos to the world of Norse mythology, Sony Santa Monica matched stellar action gameplay with an affecting story that saw the god-slaying Spartan trying to recover his lost humanity and raise his son Atreus the right way.

The upcoming sequel (and conclusion to the franchise's Norse saga) will pick up right where the last game left off, with Kratos and Atreus drawn further into conflict with the Æsir gods. Kratos' trusty Leviathan Axe and Blades of Chaos will return, matched with new abilities designed to expand the already-strong combat options.

Oh, and then there's the little matter of Ragnarök, the apocalypse that Kratos and Atreus may have initiated with their actions in the last chapter. To defy prophecy and avert the end



HIGHLY ANTICIPATED!



of the world, father and son will need to rely on allies old and new and venture to all nine realms—including some that were previously off-limits.



SUICIDE SQUAD: KILL THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

PUBLISHER WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER ROCKSTEADY
STUDIOS / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

Sure, Rocksteady Studios might be known for showing off the heroics of the Caped Crusader in its celebrated *Batman*: *Arkham* series, but what happens when Brainiac lands in Metropolis and turns the DC superheroes into his world-conquering puppets? Guess it's time to kill the bat.

That's the premise behind Rocksteady's *Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League*, the developer's first new game since 2015's *Arkham Knight*. Playing as Harley Quinn, Deadshot, Captain Boomerang, and King Shark, players must hunt down the members of the Justice League, either solo (switching between all four characters on the fly) or with up to three friends online.

Unlike *Batman*, the *Suicide Squad* has no qualms with using guns, and lots of them. Each character has their own unique style. Where Harley prefers traversing an open-world Metropolis with a grappling hook, King Shark will use his brute strength to climb skyscrapers and wield a minigun. Don't be a hero, indeed.



MARVEL'S MIDNIGHT SUNS

PUBLISHER 2K GAMES / DEVELOPER FIRAXIS GAMES / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S,
PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE Q3/Q4 2022

Just as Marvel has gotten more adventurous with its film and TV offerings (no one had *Eternals*, *Shang-Chi*, and *Moon Knight* on their bingo card back in the *Avengers* era), so too are games based on Marvel heroes heading in unexpected directions. There's no better example of this than *Marvel's Midnight Suns*.

Rather than real-time action, *Midnight Suns* finds developer Firaxis sticking to its strengths with turn-based tactical combat in the vein of *XCOM*, albeit with a decidedly different spin. Players will build a deck of ability cards and draw from their hand to sic supers on enemies, with environmental hazards paving the way for creative combat solutions.

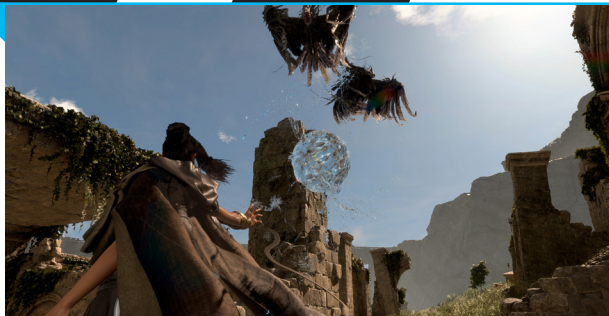
From a story standpoint, *Midnight Suns* is delving into the underexplored demons-and-magic side of the Marvel canon. Players will customize an original character, the Hunter, and team up with familiar faces like Captain Marvel, Blade, and Ghost Rider to take on Hydra and the ancient demon Lillith—who just so happens to be the Hunter's mother. Drama!

FORSPOKEN

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER LUMINOUS PRODUCTIONS / PLATFORMS PS5, PC /
RELEASE DATE 05.24.22

Forspoken's creators' credentials speak for themselves. Writers include *Uncharted* creative director Amy Hennig and *Book of Eli* screenwriter Gary Whitta, stars include *Charlie's Angels'* Ella Balinska and *Star Wars Battlefront II's* Janina Gavankar, and the development team is Luminous Productions, a Square Enix subsidiary that spun off for the development of *Final Fantasy XV*.

That cast and crew alone are enough to make *Forspoken* one of 2022's most anticipated games, but Square Enix is doing a lot of interesting things with this game besides just hiring the best people. For one, there's the story, which follows a New Yorker named Frey as she's swept into the fantastical, matriarchal world of Athia, accompanied by a talking bracelet named Cuff. Frey needs to find her way home, but in order to do that, she'll need to help the last remaining humans on Athia defeat a miasma that turns people into monsters.



BAYONETTA 3

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER PLATINUMGAMES / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE
DATE 2022

While it may be taking her a while to pay us another visit, nobody puts the “fashionable” into being fashionably late more than Bayonetta.

She may be a veteran of culling both angels and demons, but *Bayonetta 3* will pit the Umbra Witch against a mysterious new foe that appears to be neither. As the battle begins in Tokyo and then threatens to expand from there, how far will Bayonetta need to go to keep us puny humans safe from this monstrous invasion?

Bayonetta 3 will no doubt showcase more of developer PlatinumGames' trademark knack for stylish action gaming, while also upping the thrills with new techniques that allow for even more combat options. Now, Bayonetta will be able to fuse with Infernal Demons to wield even stronger magical powers, or directly control those demons in big monster battles that look like they're ripped out of the latest *Godzilla* movie.



GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / DEVELOPER TANGO GAMEWORKS / PLATFORMS
PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

In its relatively short existence, game creator Shinji Mikami's Tokyo-based development studio Tangoameworks has made a name for itself with the dark horror series *The Evil Within*. Now, the team is looking to branch out with a new take on fear in the upcoming *Ghostwire: Tokyo*.

One day, the bustling metropolis suddenly becomes quiet as nearly all of its citizens mysteriously vanish. In their place come the Visitors, unholy spirits called forth to the world of the living by an occultist named Hannya. Standing between them and the rest of humanity is a young hero who finds himself gifted with supernatural powers.

Ghostwire: Tokyo's gameplay looks to offer a mix of physical combat and psychic abilities that the dev team describes as “karate meets magic.” Unfolding fully in first-person, players will travel from temples to alleyways to defeat the darkness in an adventure that Tangoameworks promises will utilize the power of the PlayStation 5.



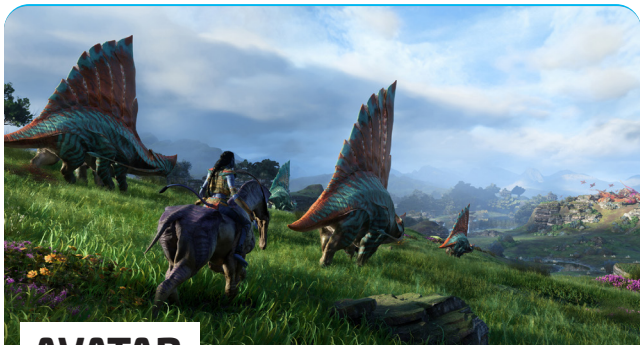
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AVATAR: FRONTIERS OF PANDORA

PUBLISHER UBISOFT / DEVELOPER MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

Set in the world of James Cameron's films, *Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora* will let players become a Na'vi and fight for their freedom from those pesky human invaders. Ubisoft is promising a "living and reactive" open world, and the first-person perspective means you'll get a close look at the otherworldly animals and plants of Pandora, whether walking across the jungle or flying on the back of a mountain banshee. And don't worry: You don't need to have seen the movie (or any of the 37 upcoming sequels) to know what's going on, since *Frontiers of Pandora* will be a standalone story.



HOGWARTS LEGACY

PUBLISHER PORTKEY GAMES / DEVELOPER AVALANCHE SOFTWARE / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

Hogwarts Legacy is shaping up to be the dream game for everyone who remembers turning 10 years old and checking the mailbox for their invitation to the titular school. The action RPG set in the wizarding world of the *Harry Potter* franchise lets you live out the fantasy of finding out if you're a Gryffindor or a Slytherin.

Set in the 1800s, *Hogwarts Legacy* lets you play as a late-acceptance fifth-year student at Hogwarts who discovers the ability to perceive and master ancient magic. Potion crafting, fantastic beast taming, and spell casting are all tasks that you'll enjoy in an open world that spans the grounds of Hogwarts and beyond.



SONIC FRONTIERS

PUBLISHER SEGA / DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE Q4 2022

For a character that's all about going fast, Sonic the Hedgehog sure was slow to make the jump to open-world gaming. Later this year, *Sonic Frontiers* will usher in that long-overdue shift by sending the blue blur to the Starfall Islands, a diverse setting featuring deserts, jungles, ancient ruins, and more. We've only seen a few brief teasers so far, so gameplay remains a mystery, but the general vibe looks akin to *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Here's hoping Sega can capture the sense of freedom that made Nintendo's game an instant classic while preserving Sonic's trademark speed.



KIRBY AND THE FORGOTTEN LAND

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER HAL LABORATORY / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 03.25.2022

Leave it to Nintendo's pink puffball to take a post-apocalyptic wasteland and make it absolutely adorable. In *Kirby and the Forgotten Land*, Kirby finds himself in, well, a forgotten land that looks like a technicolor version of *The Last of Us*' ruined world, for his first 3D adventure.

Thankfully, Kirby won't be fighting any Clickers or Hunters. While exploring jungles and abandoned shopping malls overgrown with neon grass and flowers, Kirby will encounter familiar enemies like kabus and gators as well as new foes. We're excited to see how Kirby's ability-stealing, bad-guy-huffing gameplay evolves as the series makes the leap to a full 3D platformer.

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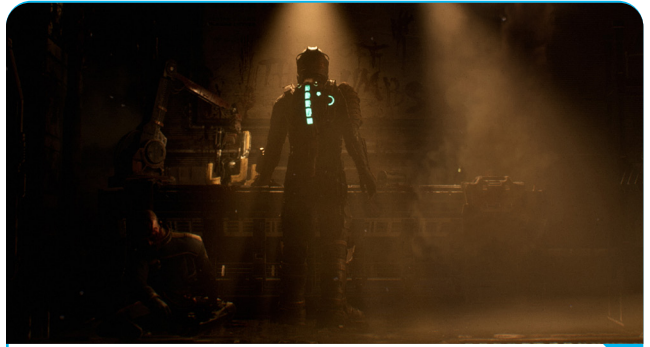
© Nintendo



STEELRISING

PUBLISHER NACON / DEVELOPER SPIDERS / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC /
RELEASE DATE 2022

Alternate takes on history are nothing new in video games, but it's hard not to love the twist that developer Spiders is giving its latest action RPG. *Steelrising* asks a simple question: "What if King Louis XVI had turned his love of clockmaking toward building an army of robots capable of quashing any threats to his power?" Okay, maybe that question isn't so simple, but it sure is intriguing. Leading the adventure will be Aegis, an automaton that was originally designed to be a dancer. Now, Aegis must protect Queen Marie-Antoinette from the mad king and his mechanical monstrosities in this steampunk retelling of the French Revolution.



DEAD SPACE

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS / DEVELOPER MOTIVE STUDIOS / PLATFORMS XBOX
SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

The original 2008 *Dead Space* is a stone-cold classic in the sci-fi/horror genre. This year, the series is ironically getting new life with a full-blown remake for current-gen consoles. We're not talking about a basic remaster with a pass on some textures and lighting; EA Motive is rebuilding *Dead Space* "from the ground up" in *Battlefield*'s Frostbite Engine.

While the story from the original *Dead Space* will remain mostly unchanged, we will see a few "improvements" to it, as well as some substantial changes to the gameplay. That includes incorporating elements from *Dead Space 2* and 3, like zero-gravity sections, into the remake.



MARIO + RABBIDS: SPARKS OF HOPE

PUBLISHER UBISOFT / DEVELOPER UBISOFT MILAN / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE
DATE 2022

Combining the worlds of Mario and Ubisoft's Rabbids in a tactical strategy game initially sounded like a ridiculous idea, but 2017's *Mario + Rabbids: Kingdom Battle* was a wonderful surprise that was as much fun to watch as it was to play. Now, those two worlds are set to come together again in *Mario + Rabbids: Sparks of Hope*. A new threat has emerged in the form of Sparks, powerful creatures formed from the fusion of Lumas and Rabbids. To stop them, Mario and the gang—along with fresh faces like Rabbid Rosalina—will travel across a new batch of less linear worlds to engage in deeper and more exciting combat scenarios.



REDFALL

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWARES / DEVELOPER ARKANE STUDIOS / PLATFORMS XBOX
SERIES X/S, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

Best known for creating compelling single-player experiences like *Dishonored: Death of the Outsider* and *Prey*, developer Arkane Austin is dipping its toes into cooperative multiplayer with its latest first-person shooter, *Redfall*. This open-world adventure tasks up to four players with taking on genetically engineered vampires that have taken over the town of Redfall, Massachusetts, by blocking out the sun. Players will take on the role of one of four vampire hunters: cryptozoologist Devinder Crouseley, telekinetic biomedical engineer Layla Ellison, combat engineer Remi De La Rosa, and enigmatic ex-military sharpshooter Jacob Boyer. Each character seems to have a different set of skills and weapons, and it will be interesting to see how they interact with an Arkane-built world.

A PLAGUE TALE: REQUIEM

PUBLISHER FOCUS ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER ASOBO STUDIO / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

While it boasted an adventure set during both the French Inquisition and the black plague, *A Plague Tale: Innocence* truly captured our attention thanks to its touching story of a sister and brother trying to find a place for themselves in a world turned to chaos.

Amicia and Hugo are now set to return in *A Plague Tale: Requiem*. After the loss of their homeland, the pair have traveled south to new lands, but even there, darkness awaits. When Hugo's curse reawakens, it threatens the peace that he and Amicia thought they'd found. There are still many secrets surrounding where *A Plague Tale: Requiem* will take the siblings, but we do know that prophecy tells of an island where a cure for Hugo's curse may await. Making it there will require overcoming enemies both human and natural with a mixture of action and stealth gameplay. And, of course, there will be rats. Lots and lots of rats.



SAINTS ROW

PUBLISHER DEEP SILVER / DEVELOPER DEEP SILVER VOLITION / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 08.23.22

Developer Volition is going back to its roots with this year's *Saints Row* reboot. Players will once again take on the role of The Boss as they try to build a criminal empire. But this new *Saints Row* introduces a new location in the desert city of Santo Ileso, and a new cast of supporting characters.

Yes, Johnny Gat is out. In his place are three fresh partners in crime. There's getaway driver Neenah, business genius Eli, and charismatic daredevil Kevin. These characters will accompany you on some missions, or you can just hang out with them while exploring Santo Ileso's massive open-world map.

With a new city come new factions all vying for the spot of Best Gang. Los Panteros will come at you with bats and other melee weapons. The Idols will swarm you with sheer numbers, and Marshall Industries will use its high-tech weaponry to take you on.



GOTHAM KNIGHTS

PUBLISHER WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER WB GAMES MONTRÉAL / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

The Bat-kids are all grown up in *Gotham Knights*, a co-op action game in which players take on the role of Batman's disciples. Developed by *Batman: Arkham Origins* studio WB Montréal, players can play as Robin, Batgirl, Nightwing, or Red Hood in this new open-world adventure.

While much of the game's story is thankfully still a mystery, we do know that the Court of Owls is involved in this one, and it seems to be turning citizens of Gotham into brain-washed assassins made in their own image. Meanwhile, other villains like Mr. Freeze have their own agendas as they wreak havoc on the city.

Gameplay is a mixture of stealth and melee combat. To get around the city, players will have access to the characters' respective motorcycles, as well as gadgets like grappling hooks as Batgirl and short-range teleportation (à la the Justice League's satellites) as Robin.

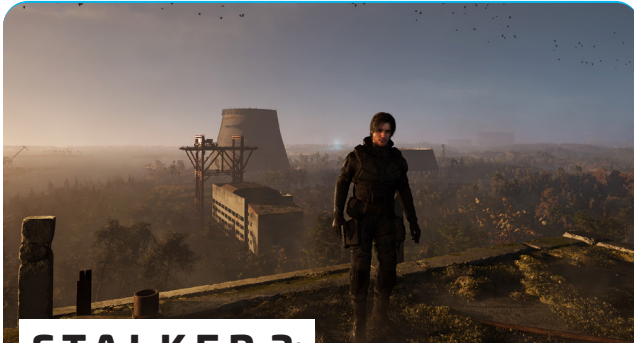
LEGO STAR WARS: THE SKYWALKER SAGA

PUBLISHER WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / DEVELOPER TT GAMES /
PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 04.05.2022

LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga recaps the events of all nine mainline films in the franchise with the LEGO games' traditionally lighthearted approach. While previous LEGO titles have covered *Episodes I* through *VII*, this isn't just a remake or remaster with more content tacked on. Instead, it's an entirely original game with an impressive new graphical style blending LEGO bricks with photorealistic environments.

Gameplay also features hefty upgrades. Lightsaber combat, for instance, will offer skilled players more to master with a combo system, and blaster-based characters like Han Solo will use a third-person, over-the-shoulder camera akin to what you'd find in a dedicated shooter.

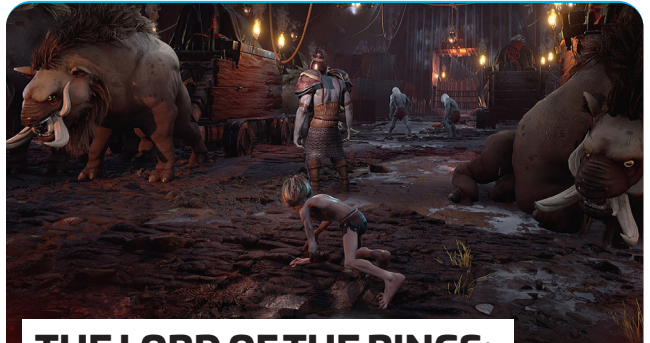
Of course, being a LEGO game, the other big draw is the roster of characters to swap between. *The Skywalker Saga* will have more than 300 familiar faces, all with abilities to match their film versions. One burning question: Will TT Games bend the canon just a teensy bit to let us play as Baby Yoda?



S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2: HEART OF CHERNOBYL

PUBLISHER GSC GAME WORLD / DEVELOPER GSC GAME WORLD / PLATFORMS XBOX
SERIES X/S, PC / RELEASE DATE 12.08.2022

Fifteen years after the original game's debut on PC, the *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* series is finally bringing its unique style of first-person shooter horror gameplay to consoles this year. In *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2: Heart of Chernobyl*, players will once again step foot into the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, where the landscape remains scarred and corrupted thanks to the fallout of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster. There, a "post-apocalyptic dark science fiction" tale will unfold where your choices can determine what happens next. Surviving the vast wasteland of the Zone will mean battling irradiated enemies and avoiding dangerous anomalies. But, for those daring enough to do so, artifacts of untold value may await. Powered by Unreal Engine 5, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2* looks to offer a gripping first-person shooter experience.

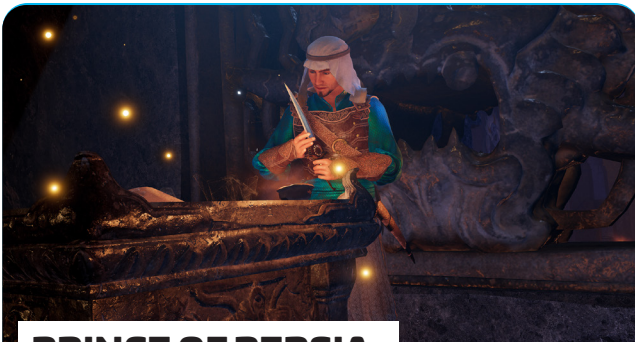


THE LORD OF THE RINGS: GOLLUM

PUBLISHER DAEDALIC ENTERTAINMENT, NAACON / DEVELOPER DAEDALIC ENTERTAINMENT /
PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

We've gotten no shortage of *Lord of the Rings* games over the years—some based on J.R.R. Tolkien's books, some based on Peter Jackson's movies, and some using the world of Middle-earth as a jumping-off point for original stories. But this year Daedalic is delivering something we've never seen: a game starring that sneaky wretch, Gollum.

Set primarily between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the story will follow a chapter of Gollum's life that Tolkien only lightly explored in his writing. With a focus on stealth-action gameplay and branching choices inspired by Gollum's split personality, the game will task players with escaping Sauron's forces in the Dark Tower and traveling across other regions of Middle-earth on his quest to reclaim the Ring from those nasty Hobbitises. You can count on familiar characters like Gandalf, Thranduil, and the Mouth of Sauron making an appearance along the way.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME REMAKE

PUBLISHER UBISOFT / DEVELOPER UBISOFT PUNE, UBISOFT MUMBAI / PLATFORMS
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

The *Prince of Persia* series was once a cash cow for Ubisoft, but it hasn't seen a game since 2010's *Forgotten Sands* (unless you count a forgettable mobile runner from 2018). You could almost say the series was lost in the sands of time.

To bring it back into the spotlight, Ubisoft is releasing *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time Remake*, a complete rebuild of its 2003 classic. Not only will the graphics get a glow-up, but gameplay will also see improvements. That includes modernized combat and traversal controls, as well as a camera that's up to 2022's standards.



SPLATOON 3

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER NINTENDO / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 2022

In the third chapter of Nintendo's beloved third-person squidder series, we'll be heading to the sun-scorched Splatlands, the area that will host this latest battle between the Inklings and the Octolings.

Of course, it wouldn't be a *Splatoon* game without a heap of helping of multiplayer Turf War chaos, so *Splatoon 3* will offer up a new roster of stages, techniques, and weapons. Possibly more interesting, however, will be its story mode, which cryptically refers to the "Return of the Mammalians." For all of the squid kids out there that know their lore, such a return could have some pretty big repercussions.



TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED SOLAR CROWN

PUBLISHER NACON / DEVELOPER KT RACING / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 09.22.2022

Test Drive Unlimited Solar Crown is a comeback a decade in the making, reviving a series that delivered a modern open-world racing experience years before *Burnout Paradise* or *Forza Horizon*. Like the first two games, *Solar Crown* will take place on a one-to-one recreation of a real-world island, using satellite data to keep every road true to life. This time around, players are headed to Hong Kong Island, a much more urbanized environment than the first two games' settings of Oahu and Ibiza. Expect to speed down neon-soaked streets and verdant mountain roads in high-end supercars like the Aston Martin DB11.



THE DARK PICTURES ANTHOLOGY: THE DEVIL IN ME

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO / DEVELOPER SUPERMASSIVE GAMES / PLATFORMS XBOX
SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 2022

For the last episode of its first season, developer Supermassive Games' *Dark Pictures Anthology: The Devil in Me* is taking inspiration from a real-life horror story. Playing as a documentary crew, players will explore a replica of serial killer H.H. Holmes' "Murder Castle" after a mysterious stranger invites them to tour it. As you can imagine, things go downhill from there. Like the previous games, you can either play alone or with friends in online or local co-op, and the decisions you make will impact how the story goes—and who survives.

preview

* PREORDER

TINY TINA'S WONDERLANDS

ROLL FOR INITIATIVE

BY JOSH HARMON

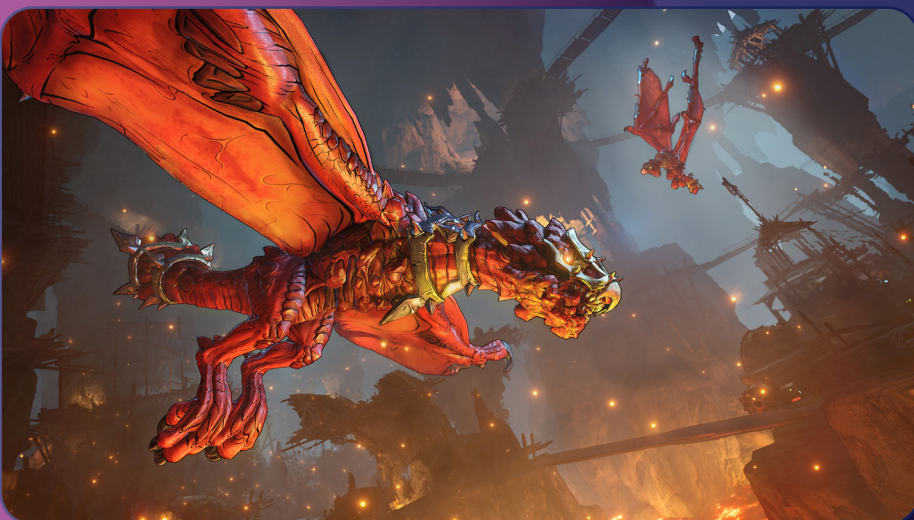
Given the heavy action focus and sci-fi setting of *Borderlands*, fans of the looter-shooter series might've been surprised when developer Gearbox Software launched *Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep*, a fantasy-RPG-themed expansion to *Borderlands 2*, back in 2013. And they might've been even *more* surprised last year when the studio announced it was spinning off the fantasy-meets-*Borderlands* setting into a full game of its own: *Tiny Tina's Wonderlands*.

But according to Gearbox senior producer Kayla Belmore, *Wonderlands* is actually a passion project years in the making. "The Gearbox team has wanted to make this game for quite a while," she shared. "Even before [*Dragon Keep*], there was a strong desire within the studio to create a fantasy RPG of some kind." The *Borderlands 2* DLC proved the concept could work, but it also generated a ton of ideas the developers wanted to explore in greater depth.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
2K GAMES
DEVELOPER
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
03.25.22





Now, almost a decade on, they're getting the chance.

Despite *Wonderlands*' connection to *Borderlands*, Belmore stressed that players don't need to be familiar with anything from that series to dive into this spin-off. "If players enjoyed the storytelling in *Dragon Keep*, we think they'll love *Wonderlands* as well," she said. "[But] *Tiny Tina*'s

"Even before [Dragon Keep], there was a strong desire within the studio to create a fantasy RPG of some kind."

KAYLA BELMORE, GEARBOX SENIOR PRODUCER

Wonderlands is not a sequel. It's a standalone title with its own rich narrative and characters."

If you haven't already guessed from the game's title, the most important of those characters is your dungeon master (or, in the parlance of *Wonderlands*, bunker master): Tiny Tina. As *Borderlands* players know all too well, Tina is an explosives-loving teenage girl and perpetual



SWELL CASTING

One of the biggest delights of *Tiny Tina's Wonderlands* is the sheer amount of voice talent packed into the cast. While *Borderlands* players will no doubt be excited to once again hear Ashly Burch as Tina and Chris Rager as Torgue, even those who are unfamiliar with the series—or games in general—should recognize the voices of a few new characters.

The game's big bad, the Dragon Lord, will be played by Will Arnett of *Arrested Development* and *Bojack Horseman* fame. *Saturday Night Live*'s Andy Samberg and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*'s Wanda Sykes will play two of your allies, Captain Valentine and Frette the Robot, respectively. While *Borderlands 3* dabbled in celebrity casting (with small roles for Ice-T and magicians Penn and Teller), *Wonderlands* is obviously ratcheting things up in a big way.

According to senior producer Kayla Belmore, it's an approach that's paid off big time. "It's incredible," she said. "Seeing some of the funniest people on the planet throw themselves into these characters has been almost surreal. We're so excited to be working with such incredible, world-class talent. Needless to say, their performances make the story even more memorable."

■ What would a *Borderlands* spin-off be without co-op? *Wonderlands* lets you team up with up to three friends.

wildcard. Given that she's the one writing and directing your fantasy adventure, the entire game is infused with her bonkers personality.

"Her near-total disregard for the rules and her appetite for chaos lead her to allow for things like guns in a fantasy setting and the spontaneous swapping of content right in front of the player," Belmore explained. "The world becomes a little less predictable, and some familiar fantasy tropes might be a little more chaotic than you're used to."

Of course, if the goal of *Wonderlands* is to put a subversive twist on the fantasy role-playing of tabletop games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, it's important the game also nails

the RPG foundation. According to Belmore, getting that mix right was a main focus of the team. "We really wanted to evoke the feeling of playing a classic tabletop RPG while incorporating our looter-shooter roots," she said.

To push the *Borderlands* formula in the right direction, the team added a ton of new fantasy-friendly options. Rather than grenades, you'll have access to a wide variety of spells, which Belmore said range "from basic fireballs to healing spells to spells that turn enemies into sheep or rain down comets all over the battlefield." Some builds will even be able to dual wield guns and spells. And when the situation calls for some close-quarters

"We really wanted to evoke the feeling of playing a classic tabletop RPG while incorporating our looter-shooter roots."

KAYLA BELMORE, GEARBOX SENIOR PRODUCER



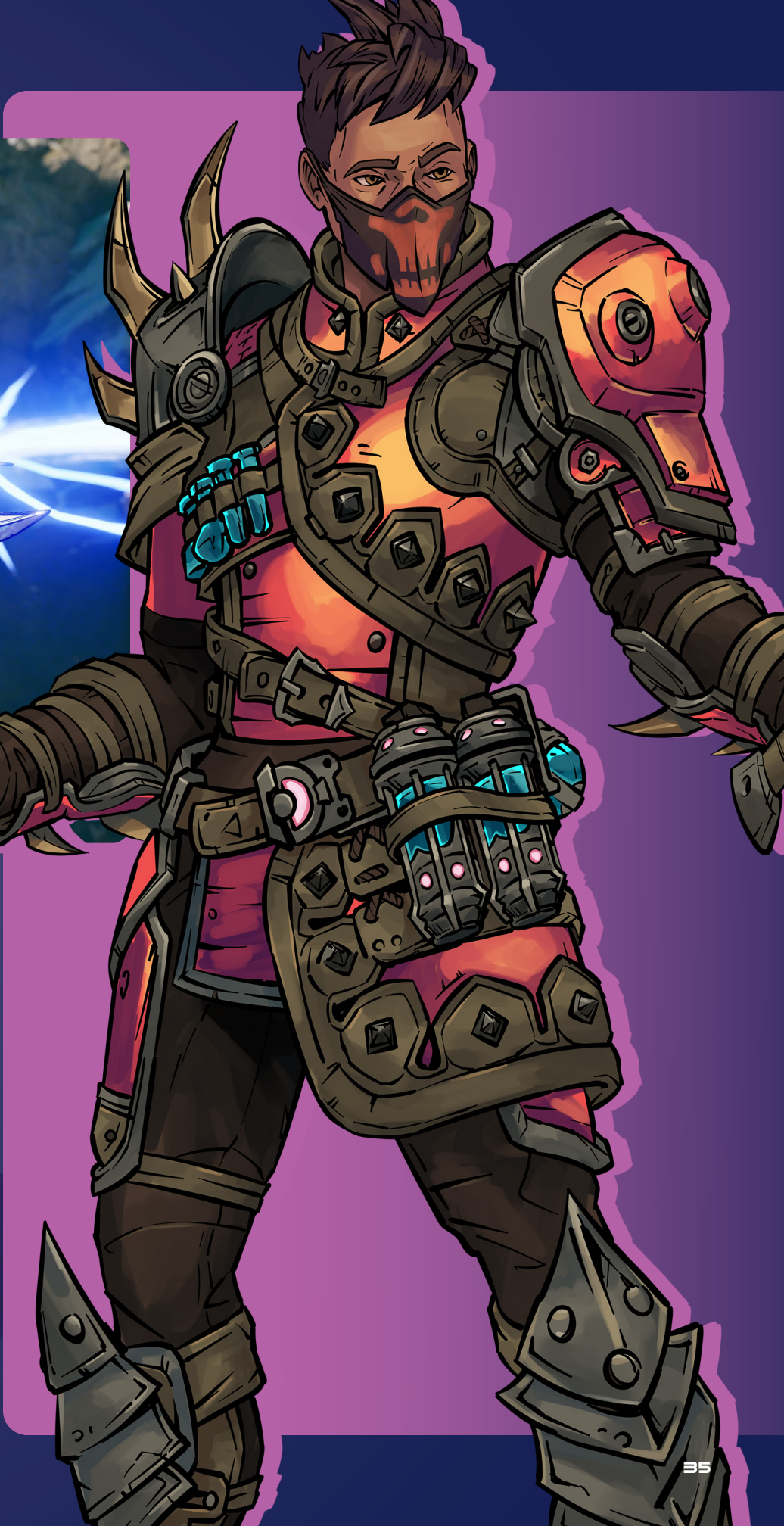


pain, you'll also be able to whip out melee weapons like swords, maces, and axes.

"Guns are still the star of the show," Belmore said. "If you want to just stand back and hold down the fire button you can, but when you start to combine all of these elements in a fluid and skillful way, *Wonderlands*' combat really shines."

To round out the RPG makeover, Belmore said the team worked to ensure players will have plenty of freedom in building out their character—just like they would in a tabletop campaign. "If you want to be an elf that hurls fireballs or an orc that wields a giant hammer, we've got you covered," she said. "You'll be able to adjust everything about your character's appearance regardless of the class you select."

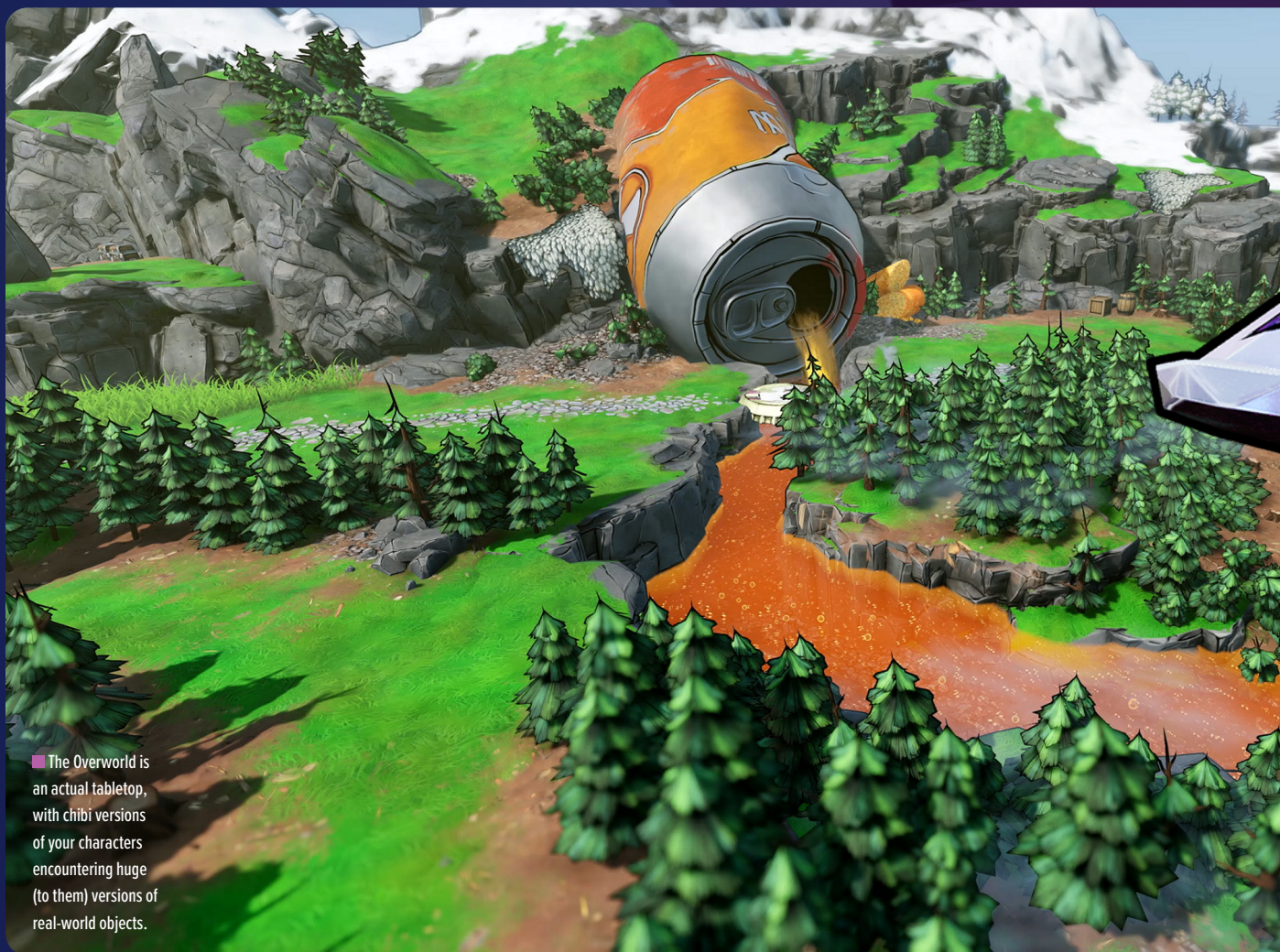
Of course, the other half of building a character in any great RPG





is progression, improving stats to unlock new abilities. While the *Bor-derlands* series did feature levels and skill trees, *Wonderlands* is taking a much more pen-and-paper approach. “You’ll be able to level up individual character stats like strength and dexterity,” Belmore said.

In another nod to *D&D*, *Wonderlands* will even let you multiclass. While you’ll pick one of six starting classes when building your character, once you’ve leveled up a bit you’ll be able to tack on a secondary class, after which you can mix and match abilities from both skill trees. In theory, you should be able to mix (for example) the magical focus of the Spellshot with the stealth of the Stab-



■ The Overworld is an actual tabletop, with chibi versions of your characters encountering huge (to them) versions of real-world objects.

bomancer to create a sneaky-casting playstyle that works for the way you want to fight.

“Our goal with multiclassing is to enable deeper player expression, especially in gameplay,” Belmore said. “There are basically no limits on what classes, stats, and gear you can combine, so we’re really excited to see what players come up with.”

“Our goal with multiclassing is to enable deeper player expression, especially in gameplay.”

KAYLA BELMORE, GEARBOX SENIOR PRODUCER



* PREORDER

STRANGER OF PARADISE FINAL FANTASY ORIGIN

IN A WORD... CHAOS

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

At E3 last year, Square Enix officially revealed *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin*, a new collaboration with Koei Tecmo and Team Ninja that presents a dark-fantasy reinterpretation of the original *Final Fantasy*.

While the game is miles (and years) apart from its 1987 NES ancestor, *Stranger of Paradise*'s bold new take on that old material isn't surprising when you find out where the idea came from: Tetsuya Nomura, the man behind Square Enix landmarks such as *Final Fantasy XV*, *Final Fantasy VII Remake*, and the *Kingdom Hearts* series.

"Nomura has always kept a number of game ideas in the back of his mind over the years," explained *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin* producer Jin Fujiwara. "One of these ideas was to create an action game in which players would complete dungeons, and another was for a game in which Garland, who first appears in the original *Final Fantasy*, would be

"[Tetsuya] Nomura has always kept a number of game ideas in the back of his mind over the years."

JIN FUJIWARA, *STRANGER OF PARADISE FINAL FANTASY ORIGIN* PRODUCER

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER
SQUARE ENIX,
TEAM NINJA
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
03.18.22



■ Team Ninja will no doubt bring some exciting new action-focused gameplay ideas to the *Final Fantasy* series.

portrayed as the protagonist. We took those two ideas as a base, and at the core of it all, we explore the concept of a new *Final Fantasy* story from Mr. Nomura's interpretation of why Garland became Chaos."

While it's easy to come to the conclusion by simply looking at screenshots, Fujiwara noted that *Stranger of Paradise* isn't a straight remake of *Final Fantasy*. Instead, it's meant as

an "alternate retelling" of the original game. And yet, one of its narrative elements created way back in 1987 makes it possible for *Stranger of Paradise* to be completely canonical.

"The story of the original *Final Fantasy* highlights a world stuck in a [time] loop, so we aim to present one possible scenario within that world where this kind of story could exist," Fujiwara said.

CHAOS!!!

If the reveal trailer for *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin* was shocking in its new take on the original *Final Fantasy*, it was also hilarious in just how determined main character Jack was to make everyone aware of his quest to kill Chaos.

Sometimes, the kind of over-the-top tone that trailer displayed can turn people off to a game. With *Stranger of Paradise*, however, it actually endeared the project to a lot of people—including us. And, thankfully, it seems the team at Square Enix isn't taking that fan reaction as a sign that they should change the game to be more serious.

Game producer Jin Fujiwara told us that in that early trailer, it was hard to convey the true intentions for the game, given there was very little they could reveal at that point. So, the team “did see some unexpected reactions.”

“However, we were able to supplement and provide more details thereafter through other announcements and the Trial Version—now we aren't startled even if there are unexpected reactions,” he added with a laugh.

And, perhaps more importantly, the team now feels fueled by the reaction *Stranger of Paradise* is getting from fans as they've been able to show off more of what awaits.

“We have more people rallying behind the game, and we have a very good feeling about how things are looking. The *Final Fantasy* series is beloved by people around the world, and we feel this title will live up to the series' name.”



■ While *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin* definitely won't feel like any previous *Final Fantasy* in many ways, it will share the franchise's penchant for gorgeous visuals.

To help realize that scenario, Square Enix reached out to Team Ninja, which the company had previously worked with on *Dissidia Final Fantasy*. More action-oriented battles are no stranger to modern *Final Fantasy*, but game director Daisuke Inoue told us that the team collaborated with Team Ninja because they wanted something different from the

“speedy and stylish heroes” we've seen in *Final Fantasy XIII*'s Lightning or *Final Fantasy XV*'s Noctis.

“As *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin* is a different kind of undertaking from those titles, we see a much different style with our protagonist Jack, who keeps a grounded stance and fights with grit,” Inoue added.





Thankfully, neither you—nor Jack—will be alone in the journey to defeat Chaos. As in *Final Fantasy*, our protagonist teams up with the other Warriors of Light, a band of heroes (supposedly) destined to save the world. While you're free to take charge of the entire party by yourself, *Stranger of Paradise* also allows for co-op, in which each player can directly control one of the three characters.

“The story of the original *Final Fantasy* highlights a world stuck in a [time] loop, so we aim to present one possible scenario within that world.”

JIN FUJIWARA, PRODUCER



■ Given the twist with main character Jack, are you trying to save the world, or destroy it?

“One reason we implemented multiplayer is to create a way for players to receive help from others if they are facing a challenge,” Inoue told us. “We also feel that it is simply a lot of fun to play with others, as characters controlled by humans show more variety in their movements compared

“One reason we implemented multiplayer is to create a way for players to receive help from others if they are facing a challenge.”

DAISUKE INOUE, GAME DIRECTOR

to those controlled by AI.”

From its multiplayer option, to its fast-action combat, to its overall tone, *Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin* is looking to be just that: fun. It certainly is a far cry from the simple sprites and 2D, turn-based battles the original game offered up, but taking risks has been a proud tradition across the *Final Fantasy* franchise’s nearly 35-year lifespan. ©



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preview

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GRAN TURISMO


IT'S CALLED A MOTOR RACE

BY JOSH HARMON

7

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
SONY INTERACTIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER
POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PLATFORMS
PS5, PS4
RELEASE DATE
03.04.22



Running down the game's features is almost like reading a list of fan favorites from throughout the history of the franchise.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of *Gran Turismo*, PlayStation's landmark racing simulator. It's no surprise, then, that the soon-to-launch *Gran Turismo Sport* seems so much like a celebration of the series' history.

Running down the game's features is almost like reading a list of fan favorites from throughout the history of the franchise. GT Mode, the beloved single-player experience from *Gran Turismo 4*, is making a glorious comeback as Campaign Mode, complete with a familiar-looking world map. But also returning are many of the modes and features introduced in

2017's *GT Sport*, so fans of that title's focus on competitive online racing will have plenty to sink their tires into as well.

In other words, if you've played and loved past *Gran Turismos*, you're going to find your favorite ways to play in this new version—along with a few new additions like the GT Café, in which you can interact with characters that will give you leads on filling out your car collection.

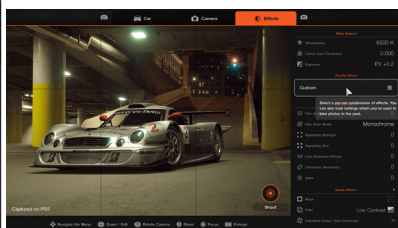
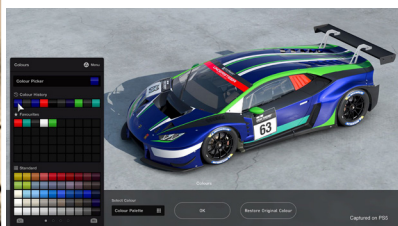
Speaking of cars, *Gran Turismo Sport* is (predictably enough) going big when it comes to the selection of vehicles. The game will include virtual versions of more than 400

OFF THE TRACK

Even if you're the kind of car fanatic who cares more about looking at cars than driving them, *Gran Turismo* 7 has plenty of features that should scratch your automotive itch.

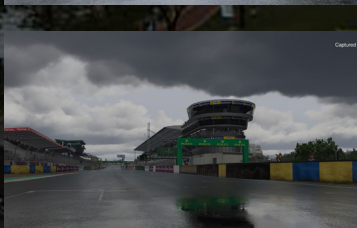
The franchise's Livery Editor, already one of the most in-depth in the genre, has gotten a complete overhaul designed to make it more useful and accessible to a wider variety of players. Rather than just laying down overlapping colors and predefined shapes, *GT Sport*'s editor allowed players to actually upload .SVG files designed in graphics software like Adobe Illustrator. An even deeper version of the feature should lead to some truly eye-popping paint jobs.

Then there's the Scapes feature, which will be included at launch for the first time in series history. Think of Scapes as Photo Mode on steroids. Instead of just pausing the action to capture a pretty picture, you can pose your favorite cars in actual real-world environments, comprising photographs and 3D lighting data. The images you can create with Scapes can truly blur the barrier between game graphics and reality.



***Gran Turismo 7*'s vehicle lineup will span 150 years of automotive history, from today's high-end racing machines to production and concept cars from throughout the ages.**





Dynamic weather means you may finish a race on a track that looks and drives differently from when you started.

automobiles, all designed to match their IRL counterparts as closely as possible when it comes to visuals, audio, and performance on the track. The lineup will span 150 years of automotive history, offering a chance to drive not just today's most expensive high-end supercars and racing vehicles but a wide selection of production and concept cars from throughout the ages.

You'll be able to race those machines on both real-world tracks and on new versions of the iconic fictional circuits from past GT games, like Trial Mountain, High Speed Ring, and Deep Forest Raceway. Plus, you can tweak the time of day and weather on each one. And because Polyphony is always extra, the studio even consulted NASA data on atmospheric particles to make sure the lighting

is as true-to-life as possible in different time, weather, and geographic configurations.

Gran Turismo Sport will come to both PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5, but as you probably expect the game will deliver a superior graphical experience on Sony's newer console, with support for 4K resolution and ray tracing, all at a buttery 60 frames per second. Plus, Polyphony is directing its trademark obsession toward the DualSense controller's advanced haptic feedback and adaptive triggers, allowing you to feel the difference between surfaces and even detect when your tires lose traction.

After all, what better way to celebrate a quarter century of great racing games than by mixing the best of the past with cutting-edge technology? [G](#)

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GAME OF THE MONTH

HALO INFINITE

THE MASTER BLASTER IS BACK

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

There was a lot riding on *Halo Infinite*, most of all for its developer. Ever since Bungie peaced out to create *Destiny*, Microsoft and 343 Industries have struggled with figuring out the best direction to take their marquee franchise. Three games later, *Halo Infinite* finally sets a clear roadmap for the series' future, and it's bright.

Halo Infinite pulls off the impressive trick of appealing to what has made *Halo* great for 20 years while also pushing the series into interesting new territories, all while focusing

on its big green mascot. Master Chief is back in the spotlight in *Infinite*, with a story that bridges the gap between the Forerunner saga and the franchise's future.

The story places Chief on Zeta Halo, where he faces off against a new threat in the Banished, while also meeting charismatic new allies in The Pilot and The Weapon. While it might ultimately feel a little light and anticlimactic compared to previous entries, it serves its purpose of giving Chief and friends a bunch of stuff to blow up and bad guys to take down.

Whereas the narrative might be slightly underwhelming, the gameplay certainly isn't. Shifting to more of an open-world model was a really smart decision by 343, giving *Halo*'s signature sandbox nature and physics engine room to flourish. Exploring Zeta Halo while bombing around on a Warthog or Mongoose, only to stumble upon a Banished outpost that you can approach from any direction, feels so obvious that it's surprising *Halo* never tried it before.

Two elements make the open-world approach work so well. The

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
XBOX GAME STUDIOS
DEVELOPER
343 INDUSTRIES
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S,
XBOX ONE, PC
RELEASE DATE
12.08.2021



first is how 343 breaks up the exploration with more focused, linear missions that also provide plenty of opportunities for over-the-top action.

The second is the Grappleshooter—maybe the most revolutionary feature ever added to a *Halo* game. Not only does the grappling hook let you zip across the map and climb sheer cliffs, but it also gives you unlimited flexibility in combat. You can grapple onto enemies and punch them in the face,

Halo Infinite's campaign is one of the most fun single-player experiences you can have right now.

grab explosive barrels and toss them around, and even pick up weapons from the ground.

Halo Infinite's campaign is one of the most fun single-player experiences you can have right now. Unfortunately, the only downside is that we have to wait to play it in co-op. In the meantime, the game's free-to-play multiplayer refines and reestablishes *Halo* as a top-tier first-person shooter. *Halo* is back, and better than it has been in a long time. [G](#)



1 ON 1

TOBIAS SEVERIN

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR, CHORUS
STUDIO DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, DEEP SILVER FISHLABS

While 2021 was filled with plenty of bombastic blockbuster hits and unique indie experiences, one game that aimed to fly through the gap between those two ends of the universe was Deep Silver Fishlabs' *Chorus*. Part open-world adventure, part space shooter, and even part atmospheric horror game, *Chorus* offers up a richly crafted slice of space in which we strap into the seat of foe-turned-sorta-friend ace pilot Nara. To learn more about the journey of Nara and her advanced sentient spaceship Forsaken, we tracked down production director Tobias Severin in a remote quadrant and paid him enough credits to transfer over some details.

WGC: *Chorus* isn't necessarily an easy game to describe in just a few sentences, but what would be your best attempt at doing so?

Tobias Severin: *Chorus* is an action-adventure space-combat shooter where players take on the role of Nara, a former pilot of a cult referred to as The Circle. Having become disenfranchised with her former masters, Nara has become a renegade. She now helps the resistance fight back against their oppressors with the help of her ship, Forsaken, a self-aware sentient starfighter that is unlike any other videogame ship that you have ever seen before. The relationship between Nara and Forsaken not only is fundamental to the story, but also forms the basis for *Chorus*' special abilities and character development.

WGC: While there are plenty of space shooters on the market, *Chorus* definitely feels different. How would you explain

the elements of its gameplay that make it stand out?

TS: Gameplay-wise, Nara's special abilities completely change the gaming experience. For example, we enable the player to teleport behind an enemy with a push of a button. This creates a whole different dynamic during the dogfights. Or take Forsaken's drift mechanic, for example—this makes fighting so much more fun. And, I think the mixture of sci-fi action shooter and a darker tone provides a nice twist which is not so common for the genre.

WGC: What was the impetus behind mixing in the supernatural abilities Nara can unleash, given that the setting of the

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

DEAD ISLAND: SURVIVORS, GALAXY ON FIRE
3 – MANTICORE, EUROPA 1400: THE GUILD

game is more angled toward technological, sci-fi themes?

TS: Being able to tap into some supernatural fantasy and bending reality gives us as game designers a lot of creative freedom to experiment with features and concentrate on what is most important: fun.

WGC: *Chorus* has an engaging story that we don't want to spoil here, but could you share some of the inspirations the team built upon for that story?

TS: There is no one inspiration. The development of a game is a creative process of evolution. We wanted to create a more mature character that would connect with the player. As we developed *Chorus*, we fleshed out aspects of the narrative, and the relationship between Nara and her ship became more and more important to us.

WGC: *Chorus* lets players explore around a number of open-world-style star systems. What were the challenges of developing those types of environments versus more traditional ground-based game worlds?

TS: Player guidance is a big topic. This is much more challenging if you cannot rely on natural borders like terrain or mountains. The team solved that by creating very dense levels and providing a clear horizon, instead of sending the player from waypoint to waypoint. It took us some time, but I think the level design team really succeeded and created something unique here.

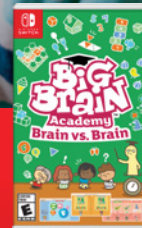
WGC: Speaking of the Rites Nara can call upon, if you could have any one of them to use in your everyday life, which would you choose and why?

TS: Rite of Hunt for sure. Blinking behind people and giving them the fright of their lives sounds like fun. Or imagine playing soccer... oh, I would be unstoppable. 🏈

I think the mixture of sci-fi action shooter and a darker tone provides a nice twist which is not so common for the genre.



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